

**SECRET**

*No. 3*

THE "DEFENSE PROJECT," FIRST POST-WAR EXPERIMENT IN  
COOPERATIVE INTERDEPARTMENTAL INTELLIGENCE PRODUCTION

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COOPERATIVE INTERDEPARTMENTAL INTELLIGENCE PRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

The "Defense Project," a registered code name for what became the first Strategic Intelligence Digest on the USSR, is described in its preface as a "unique" experiment in the production of finished intelligence through coordinated multi-departmental effort. It was the first post-war attempt to produce intelligence transcending the capabilities of any one department on a broad scale. It demonstrated, early in the post-war period, the paucity of our intelligence on Soviet Russia; the impossibility of producing exhaustive studies, no matter how urgently needed, as quickly as had been supposed; and some of the typical difficulties involved in securing full interdepartmental cooperation.

The idea for the Defense Project originated in the Military Intelligence Section of the War Department General Staff, probably in the mind of Colonel J. R. Lovell. Lovell apparently proposed the idea to the Chief of Military Intelligence who suggested to Admiral Souers in March, 1946, that the Central Intelligence Group participate in the project. Because the Group had been unable to acquire sufficient staff from the other Agencies to do its own immediate work, Souers was unable to provide analysts to work on the project, but said that the Group would furnish a "coordinator." The Army was the "sponsor" of the project; but Souers undertook, in an undated memorandum to the Intelligence Advisory Board, to "take over the formal sponsorship of the project at the earliest possible moment."

The Defense Project was "formalized" by "CIG Directive No. 9" of

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1. All "Defense Project" material here in reference  
is in the files of the Basic Intelligence  
Division of the Office of Research and Reports.



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9 May 1946, but the actual committees in charge of it had already convened and were seeking ways and means of producing the desired study.

A memorandum of 6 March 1946, signed by Colonel Lovell and [ ]

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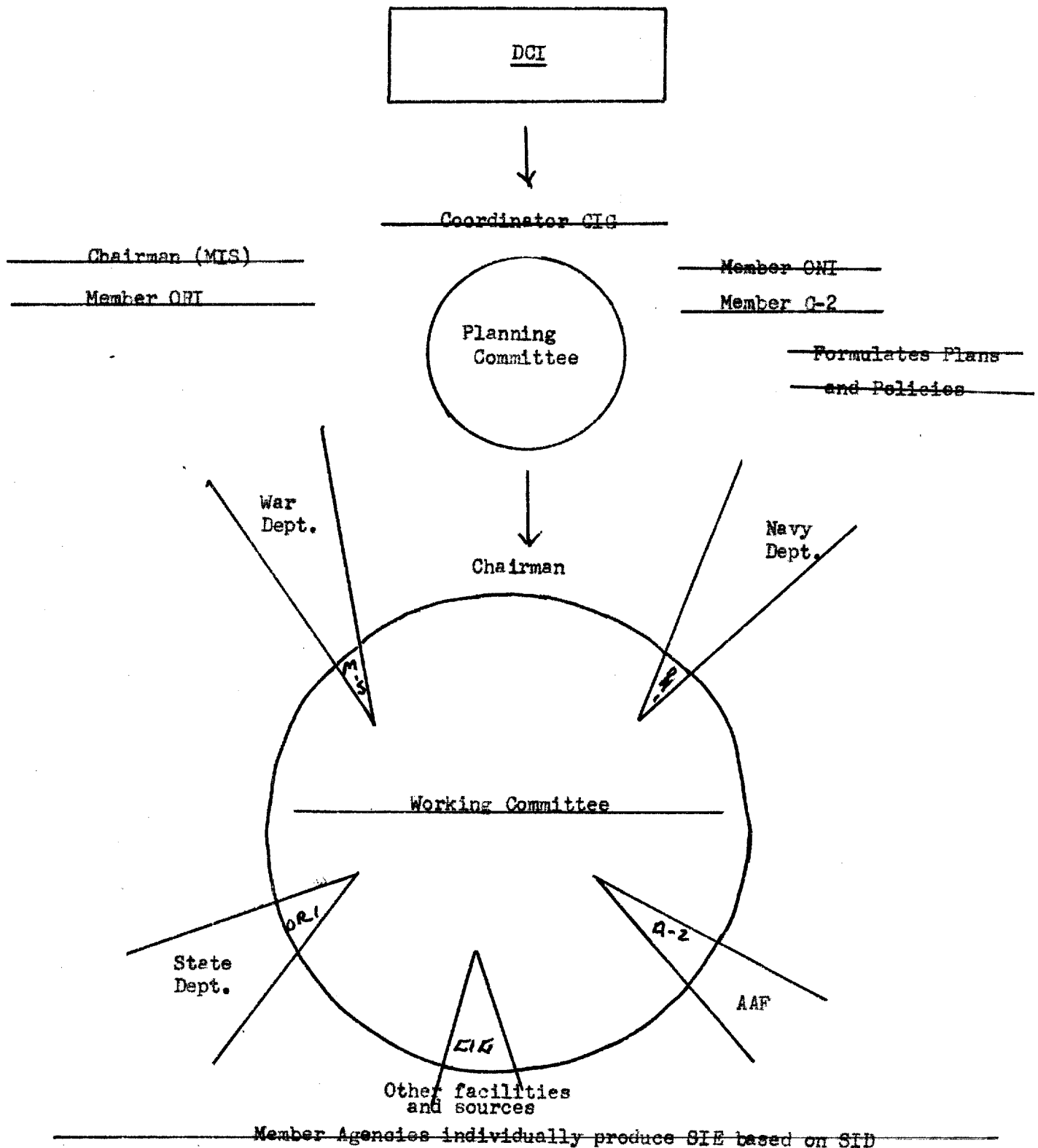
[ ] indicates that discussions, possibly informal, had already been carried on well before that date and that a Planning Committee was already in existence, consisting of Lovell as Chairman, [ ] representing the Central Intelligence Group, Captain S. B. Frankel, the Office of Naval Intelligence; Mr. Sherman Kent, the Office of Research for Intelligence (State); Colonel J. F. Olive, Army Air Force Intelligence; and Lieutenant Colonel T. Achilles Polyzoides, G-2 (Army), as Secretary. Their mission was to "explore, pool, and develop resources of all agencies of the US Government to assure production of the highest possible quality of intelligence on the USSR and its peripheral areas in the minimum possible time." The memorandum expressed the belief that considerable intelligence on the USSR existed within the government and that it was of vital importance that it be collected, compiled, and published in usable form. As of 11 March, a Working Committee was to be formed consisting of two officers (or analysts) and a secretary from each agency.

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The accompanying tracing of a diagram which was attached to the Lovell-[ ] memorandum shows how the Project was to be handled by the two committees. The Director of Central Intelligence was to be represented on the Planning Committee by his Coordinator whose function would be to settle disagreements that might arise among the members. The Army representative was to be chairman; the other agencies would be represented, and there would be a secretary. The Secretary of the Planning Committee was also chairman of the Working Committee, whose

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function was to get the actual work done by the agencies. Into the Working Committee was to be funnelled all the information that could be derived from the four Agencies, the Central Intelligence Group, and "other facilities and sources," including non-intelligence agencies of the government in a position to contribute.

It was planned that on completion of the Project, each Agency except the Central Intelligence Group would use it as the basis for its own Strategic Intelligence Estimate - in other words, would draw its own intelligence conclusions from the mass of evidence. It is interesting, in the light of later developments and the general idea of Central Intelligence that each Agency was to produce its own Strategic Intelligence Estimate, rather than have a single National Intelligence Estimate prepared by the Central Intelligence Group and coordinated with the rest.

The Planning Committee met on 6 March 1946, and decided that the first task to be undertaken by the Working Committee should be the review of "JIC 250/8," JIS 231, and JIC 341," the extant joint intelligence papers on the USSR. The Committee also called for editors, the need of whose services was foreseen if the Project was to become a reality. The Departments maintained that they had no editors to spare and proposed that editorial assistance be furnished by the Central Intelligence Group. Inasmuch as the Central Reports Staff had the only two people in the Group classed as editors, however, and since these two were fully occupied, the Group could not oblige.

In this connection, it is interesting to note that [ ] writing for the "Intelligence Branch" of the Central Plans Staff of the Central Intelligence Group, raised the question whether or

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not the Group, even though it had had editors to furnish, should have assigned them to the Defense Project. To do so, he argued, would be to make these representatives more than "coordinators;" for if they edited the text of the Defense Project, they would be participating in the actual production and thus taking some responsibility for the result of research done by others. [ ] further questioned whether such a departure from pure coordination could be justified under paragraph 3-a of the President's executive order of 22 January.

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On 13 May, Admiral Souers directed the Central Plans Staff to appoint a coordinator for the Planning Committee who would act for the Director in his capacity of making decisions when the committee members could not agree. Souers empowered the coordinator to act as agent for the Director of Central Intelligence and directed that only in the case of major controversies was he to bring the matter, through the Central Plans Staff, to the Director's personal attention. Mr. James Lay, as Secretary of the National Intelligence Authority, notified the members of the Planning Committee that the Acting Chief of the Intelligence Branch of the Central Plans Staff [ ] had been appointed Coordinator, presumably to "act for the Director."

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A week later, however, Mr. [ ] was put on notice by "Special Assignment #2" that on the contrary, he was to make no decisions without prior consultation with the Chief of the Central Plans Staff.

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As a result of this decision the files of the Defense Project contain a report of each meeting of the Planning or Working Committee that [ ] attended. These reports show that the Committees were concerned, first with getting the review of the Joint Intelligence Committee

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documents out of the way, then with outlining the forthcoming project and allocating responsibility for its component parts, and finally with devising a modus operandi to provide the working committee the needed intelligence in the minimum time and with the highest degree of security.

The process of clearing the decks of the Joint Intelligence Committee papers consumed some two months, and it was not until 4 June that a tentative outline had been provided on the basis of which allocations could be made. A major argument meanwhile developed over the "Task Force" vs. the "sub-committee" method of getting the work done. The Task Force (i.e. inter-agency committee) method, which would have meant giving access to an Agency's files to those not under the control of that Agency, was rejected on security grounds.

The completed project, as outlined, was to contain numerous chapters and sub-chapters dealing with the political, economic, and military structure of the USSR plus geographical, climatic, and topographical features; sociological backgrounds, ethnology, scientific capabilities, and the like. In the original allocations Army Intelligence was charged with the preparation of much of the economic and political data. On motion of the State Department representative (Dr. William Langer), however, this plan was revised, and "three-fifths" of the political material was assigned to the State Department. (Later, however, State was found unable to comply fully and some of the economic assignments were reassigned to Army.) All obstacles to the actual commencement of work on the project seemed now to have been cleared away, and Colonel Lovell expressed the belief - not shared by all members of the committee - that the work



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could be completed in two months.

The Defense Project began in an atmosphere of the utmost urgency and the deepest secrecy. Recent events had aroused such alarm over the growing belligerency of the USSR that our relative ignorance of Russian strength in relation to our own, Russia's true ambitions with respect to the post-war world, or even the homely details of daily living and thinking in Soviet Russia was deeply felt. Consequently, great pressure was brought to bear on the Defense Project Committees to complete the project quickly.

The intelligence agencies, never really having tried to compile voluminous information on an officially friendly state in time of peace, were optimistic over what they would be able to do if called on to undertake such a task. Each agency seems to have entertained the comfortable belief that each other agency must have important stores of information on Soviet Russia not possessed by itself. It seemed reasonable to suppose that if the resources of all were pooled under the coordinating hand of the Central Intelligence Group, an adequate survey could be completed in a few months.

Perhaps from fear of consequences to our relations with the Soviets if it were discovered that the United States had made this ostensibly friendly nation a primary target for an intelligence study which resembled what would normally be aimed at an enemy or potential enemy, the need for security was considered unusually great. Everything that had to do with the study was classified TOP SECRET; the number of persons privy to the scheme was drastically limited; the finished document was to be

distributed to the Intelligence Agencies only and then to a very limited group within the agencies; and there was even talk of issuing special badges to those authorized to work on the project.

Colonel Lovell's hopeful estimate of completion by September proved to be unrealistic. On 10 December, with the work far from complete, the whole project was suspended pending decision of the interdepartmental committee that had recently been formed to outline the "National Intelligence Survey" program. The task of this committee, under the chairmanship of the Chief of the Basic Intelligence Group of Central Intelligence, was to find the means whereby the wartime Joint Army-Navy Intelligence Surveys could be amended, expanded, and brought up to date. Since the Defense Project, in essence, was but one of these National Intelligence Surveys, albeit the most important one, it was considered advisable to fit it into the standard pattern rather than have the work done independently and less efficiently under another system.

This, of course, involved a change in the theory of the Group as coordinator. Under the National Intelligence Survey program the Central Intelligence Group furnished not only editorial service for agency drafts, but through the regional and functional branches of the Office of Reports and Estimates, passed judgment on the adequacy and accuracy of the substantive material in Agency contributions.

When the work on the Defense Project was resumed on 15 April 1947, the same committees were retained, but  of Central Intelligence (appointed 24 February 1947) took the place of Colonel Polyzoides as Secretary of the Planning Committee and Chairman of the Working Committee, while simultaneously acting as Central Intelligence

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representative to the Project. The "coordinator" was to be Captain  
25X1 [ ] Chief of the Basic Intelligence Group and Chairman of  
the interdepartmental committee on the National Intelligence Surveys.

The date for completion was now set for 1 July 1947. Mr. Allan Evans, speaking for the State intelligence organization, was confident that his part, at least, could be completed by that date. On 3 July, however, State was described as being unable to meet a new deadline set for 1 August. The target date had therefore to be moved ahead to the first of October. It is quite evident not only that the task had proved much more difficult than had first been supposed, but that as the pressure for completion diminished, the work slowed down.

The official date of publication for the "Defense Project" as a whole was 1 March 1948. Parts of the three volume work are dated even later. The pressure for elaborate security precautions also weakened as time went on and the relations between the United States and the USSR became strained beyond the point where the existence of an intelligence study on the Soviets would have surprised or alarmed anyone. The paragraph in "CIG 9", directing that all aspects of the Defense Project should be classified TOP SECRET was soon relaxed in favor of a TOP SECRET covering classification, with lower classifications to be made at the discretion of the Working Committee for individual sections within the total study. Finally, even this provision was found to be too stringent, and the project as a whole was down-graded to SECRET. The project, as published, has a SECRET classification; but many of the sections are no more than CONFIDENTIAL, and subsequently, some parts of the work have

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been declassified entirely. Distribution, originally intended to encompass no more than selected parts of the intelligence establishment, was progressively widened to take in many other agencies of the government, US missions abroad, and exchange with foreign countries.

"SID-1," as completed, displays gaps in information about the USSR, even in fields where information would normally be available from overt sources. In some fields, the authors professed to have no information at all. The accuracy of some sections is admittedly dubious. Probably the principal purpose served by this study, aside from providing at least a partial source of information on the USSR where there had been none at all before, was to demonstrate the need for learning more about the USSR. From the Defense Project, furthermore, a good deal could have been learned about the difficulties of producing large-scale joint intelligence in time of peace.

The records seem to show that the various departments were not entirely prepared for full cooperation. For one thing, each Agency tended to be interested in the project primarily as it would serve its own individual purposes (e.g. the Air Force saw mainly in the Project a means of throwing more light on "strategic vulnerabilities" of the USSR); for another, no department seems to have been willing to cooperate to the extent that its own facilities became fully available to the rest.

It became necessary at last for Central Intelligence to become a more active participant in the project than had been originally intended. The Group was not, of course, in position to insist on Agency cooperation with itself as coordinator or with each other, but it did begin to

furnish the central editorial services that such a project so obviously required; to act as the necessary clearing house for work being done in many quarters, and to be the agent for publication of the final results. In spite of the establishment of intelligence research in the Office of Reports and Estimates after July, 1946, however, the Central Group did not participate in research for the Defense Project, or for any of the other work under the National Intelligence Survey program. The only connection here was in the accelerated expansion of the Office of Reports and Estimates in 1946, a partial explanation for which may be found in General Vandenberg's discovery of weaknesses in Agency research that were being exposed in the course of the Defense Project's development.<sup>1</sup>

The Defense Project might have been undertaken with equally satisfactory results even though no Central Intelligence Agency had existed. As the case actually developed, however, the progress toward greater centralization than had been at first intended appears to have been inevitable. It would be impossible to estimate whether or not the work might have gone forward more rapidly and with better results if there had been a central agency with power to act as well as to coordinate.

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1. According to [ ] (see above p. ) deficiencies in material provided for the Defense Project in the fall of 1946 were brought orally to the attention of the General who commented that in that case, the Office of Reports and Estimates should be expanded as rapidly as possible in any department where agency inadequacies had been discovered.

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